

Intentional Collaboration & Innovation Spaces at NASA

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Collaboration and Innovation (C&I) are extremely popular terms in corporate jargon, and institutions with reputations for creativity often have clever and fun spaces set aside for hatching ideas and developing products or services. In and of themselves, a room full of “collaboration furniture” and electronics can’t make C&I happen, any more than oil makes a gas or diesel engine run. As with the engine, though, quality lubrication is a huge factor in the smooth operation, power, and longevity of C&I activity. This paper describes spaces deliberately set up at numerous NASA field centers to support collaborative and creative thinking and processes. (Sometimes support is not so much a matter of doing things to spark discussion as it is removing constraints imposed by traditional settings and making information sharing as easy as possible.) Some spaces are rooms or suites dedicated to C&I, with significant electronic support and/or intentional lack thereof (to emphasize the human element). Others are small, comfortable “roosting places” that invite conversations of opportunity. Descriptions include the sponsoring organization, underlying goals and philosophies, lessons learned, and opportunities to excel. There is discussion about how such areas might interconnect within centers, across NASA, and with external entities using current technology and what tools and approaches may be in our future.

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